

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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MADHAVA SINDHIA.
RULERS OF INDIA. MADHAVA RAO SINDHIA,
LUTHERAN KING OF MUDHOOR, by H. G.
Koenig, C. I. E., M. A., 12mo, pp. 207. Oxford:
The Clarendon Press.

The story of Sindhia is not that of an ideal hero, but of an Oriental who, when monarch, corruption and all the vices of a falling civilization, prevailed throughout Hindostan, threw his sagacity, courage, honesty and singleness of purpose into the scales against the forces of discord, and tried to restore coherence to the decrepit Mogul Empire, and to secure peace and safety to the tormented and oppressed people of India. He was a prominent member of that Hindu Confederacy which, in the words of Mr. Koenig, "indicates an epoch in that perennial struggle which has been going on for eight centuries in India between the social and religious systems of the Hindus and that of their Moslem conquerors." Sindhia appeared upon the scene when the Mogul Empire was near its final stage of decline. Though so modern in time that its last representative has not long been dead, it was in all essentials a fragment of the ancient world; a counterpart, in all but its religious system, of the great monarchies of Babylon and Persia. There was in such an Empire neither security nor the possibility of security, either for the ruler or the ruled. A great gulf yawned between the mass of the people and the wealthy and noble classes. Intrigue at home and rebellion abroad marked the reigns of the last emperors. The subjects are concentrated on the person and policy of the ruler. It is still a shifting scene of contrast, the monarch of one moment becomes the victim of another, or the puppet of an ambitious minister, but of his own will, and unpredictable changes. The autocrat—no better, sadder or happier than the meanness of his peasants—watches his perishable frame in brocade and jewels, and takes his death upon the scaffold with the undimmed eyes of an observer kin-men and tabernacled in ordered ranks beneath the elevated platform and marshalled the courtiers, miltary and clerical, in perfect array. The nobles, the assessors, and representatives of those who are absent in the distant regions, ruling the provinces of the Empire or commanding its military forces. The eternal picture was presented to David the Hebrew, to Cæsars the Greek, to Tavernier the French, to the merchant and the correspondent of Colobet.

Such was the Mogul Empire where Sindhia played his part upon the stage. His first important act was nearly ruinous to himself. In 1750 he and his brother Dostji, shared the command of the Marathas in Hindostan, and took part in the famous battle of Panipat, which was fought as part of a plan to drive the Mussulmans out of Hindostan and acquire the universal rule of India for the Marathas. The army of the latter had been reorganized. It no longer consisted of a sort of guerilla cavalry, but included a large force of regularly trained horsemen, and also a considerable body of infantry drilled by French instructors, and a train of artillery under a veteran Mussulman soldier of fortune, who had learned French discipline and tactics under Issy. Among the great chiefs present with their contingents were Holkar and Sujal Mal. These wished the Shah, who was commander-in-chief, to follow the old irregular tactics of the Marathas; namely to waylay the country, to cut off convoys, and not to risk a battle until the enemy were reduced to famine or scattered in search of food. The Shah, however, had seen the effect of guns and disciplined troops in southern campaigns, and believed that these advantages were now on his side. But he was mistaken. The Afghans contrived to drive the Hindus under the walls of Panipat, and held them there two months, until their supplies failed, and famine at last drove them to risk a general engagement. The disciplined Hindu troops and artillery held their own well. But the generalship was with the Afghans and Robtins, and a body of heavy Afghan cavalry finally broke the ranks of Gurd's force, and panic and profligate slaughter followed. In oriental battles of the time there was never any thought of orderly retreat in the event of a reverse. Panic flight, dissolution of the beaten army, was the rule. At Panipat Sindhia fled for his life, but was overtaken by an Afghan trooper, who crippled him for life by a blow on the knee, but contented himself with stripping his helpless foe, and so left him.

He was saved by a peasant who lifted the wounded man into his cart and sheltered him. Sindhia never forgot this help, and afterward made the fortune of the peasant, who rose to be a general of distinction in his benefactor's army. It might be thought that the battle of Panipat would have discredited the French discipline; but Sindhia perceived clearly that the fault was not with the discipline, but lay in the penury of the disciplined force and the weakness of the undisciplined factors of the army. He himself subsequently secured the services of De Bolign, a French soldier of reputation, and eventually put him in command of all his forces, and continually increased the proportion of disciplined troops in the army, but after Panipat Sindhia showed his wisdom in cultivating caution. He repressed his Maratha impulsiveness, and used strategy whenever possible. Though he became a soldier of renown, and a statesman of wide-spread fame, he was often defeated, and more than once reduced to really desperate straits. This was largely due to the fact that in that time of war the Indian princes usually deserted, and then fell upon any neighbor or ally who seemed to be in perilous case. There was no such thing as honor, good faith or friendship in Indian politics, and every statesman had to reckon upon the possibility that to-day's warmest allies might be to-morrow's bitterest enemies.

In spite of all vicissitudes, however, Sindhia made steady progress in influence. He came to exercise virtually absolute control over the Mogul Empire, ruling nominally as the deputy of the aged Emperor, who had been blinded and sorely misused by an adventurer who seized Delhi, as such adventurers were prone to do. Sindhia drove off the ruffian, though too late to save the old Emperor's eyes, and therewith he cared for the shadow of a monarch, and used his name to screen his own initiative. A portion of humanity, somewhat overdone, was a favorite recourse with him. It does not appear to have deceived his contemporaries. He never quarreled seriously with the East India Company. Warren Hastings esteemed him highly, and played into his hands. With Lord Cornwallis he did not get on so well, and tried a rash experiment upon that ruler by announcing that he proposed to demand tribute of the company. The answer he received was so prompt and stern that he instantly disavowed the intention. Throughout he entertained a wholesome respect for the British soldier, and never could be brought to join any scheme for attacking the English in India. The account of his character here given certainly goes far to justify Mr. Koenig's assertion that "amongst Asiatic public men, at least, there is no other name that can be fairly matched with that of Mandhava Sindhia; and even to these few, superior, alike in the scale of his success and in the qualities of his head and heart." During his lifetime he stood preeminent among his fellows, and his far-sighted policy prepared the way for the changes which were to follow, though much of his achievement fell to the ground later through the incompetence of his successors.

His death was sudden. It was officially ascribed to fever; but a circumstantial legend is given by a contemporary writer to the effect that he was attacked while riding in the evening, near Poona, by a body of the retainers of an enemy, and though his escort beat off the assailants, Sindhia received wounds from which he died on the following day. The exact truth concerning his death will never be known, but assassination was so completely in accordance with Oriental ethics and politics during the eighteenth century that the above story cannot be thought improbable. Mr. Koenig has told the story of Sindhia's picturesque and stirring life with spirit and fulness of knowledge, and the sketch, though involving a good deal of complicated intrigue and counter-intrigue, will be found unfeeling in interest.

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